

The unemployment insurance component (the so-called Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act) of the federal stimulus package is a small part of the total program offered to Mississippi, about 2 percent. I've already accepted raising unemployment benefits by \$25 a week and extending the qualifying period for some recipients by an additional 33 weeks, two elements of the stimulus that do not impact state law or taxes.

No Governor and no Legislature in Mississippi have ever accepted the kinds of permanent changes to state law that would be required under UIMA. I don't plan to be the first, because Mississippi law on this subject is practical and prudent. It makes no sense to extend unemployment benefits to those who are unwilling to seek a full-time job and create a huge new benefits program that will have no money when the federal funding runs out – unless a big new tax increase is imposed on employers.